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SAN SAVINO AT PIACENZA

I. HISTORY AND STRUCTURE

[PLATES V-VII]

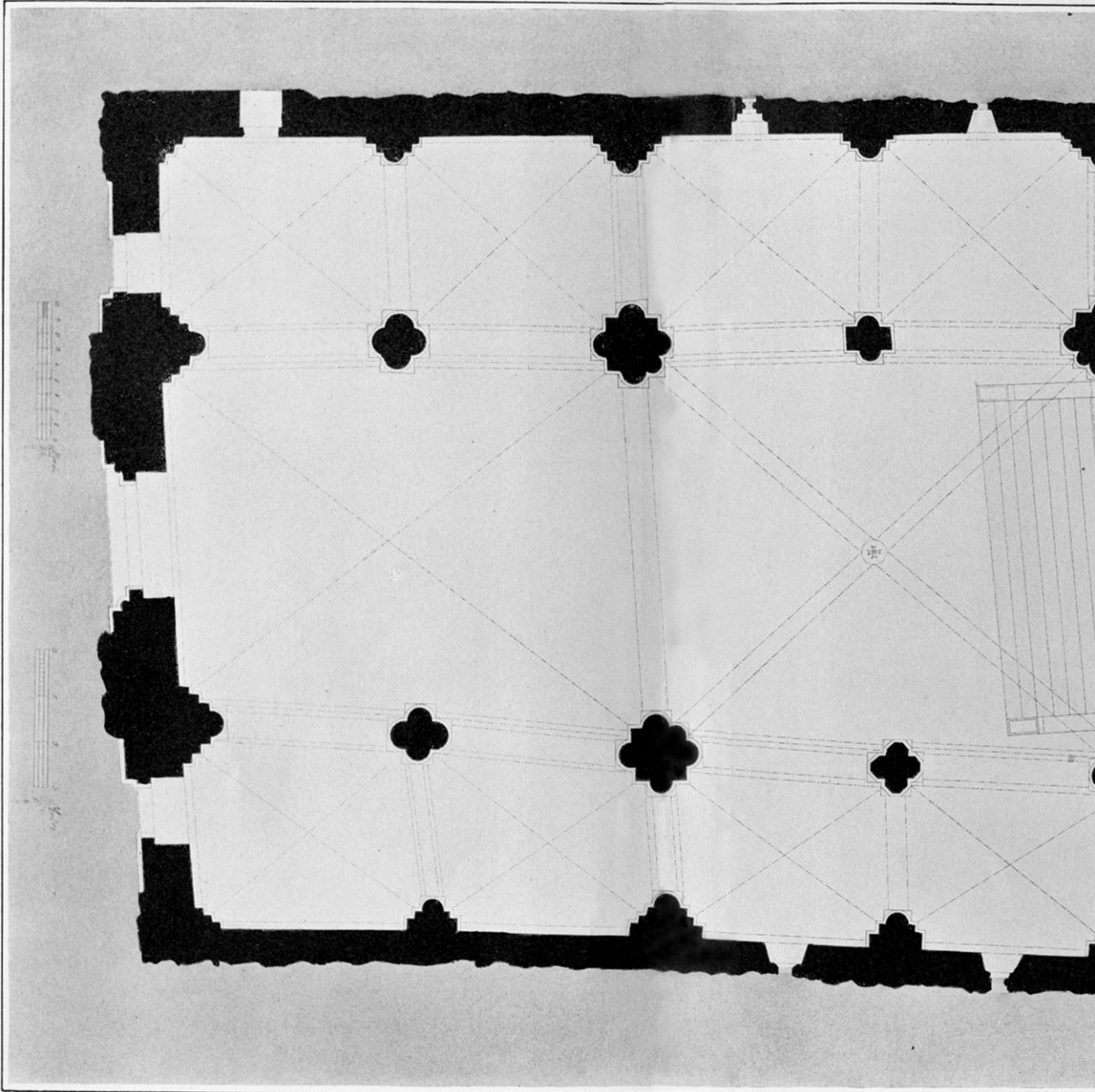
THE church of San Savino at Piacenza cannot be said to be unknown, since it has occasionally been referred to by writers on the history of art, especially such of them as have occupied themselves with Romanesque mosaics. It is, nevertheless, a singular fact that this edifice, although situated in a city visited by great numbers of tourists and students, has not, up to the present, been given serious study. The passing notices which we find in the works of scholars of such standing as Venturi,¹ Strzygowski,² Dehio,³ and Ambiveri,⁴ either pass by in silence, or give actually misleading information upon the purely architectural features of the church. In the history of Lombard architecture, however, San Savino should occupy a place second to few if any other monuments. Not only is the church intrinsically of the greatest interest, but since it is authentically dated, it furnishes a central point of chronological support which makes it possible by the method of comparison to establish the epoch of other edifices, such as, for example, Sant' Ambrogio at Milan and San Michele at Pavia. Had the many

¹ A. Venturi, *Storia dell' arte italiana*. Milano, Ulrico Hoepli, 1901. 7 vols., 8vo. III, 427.

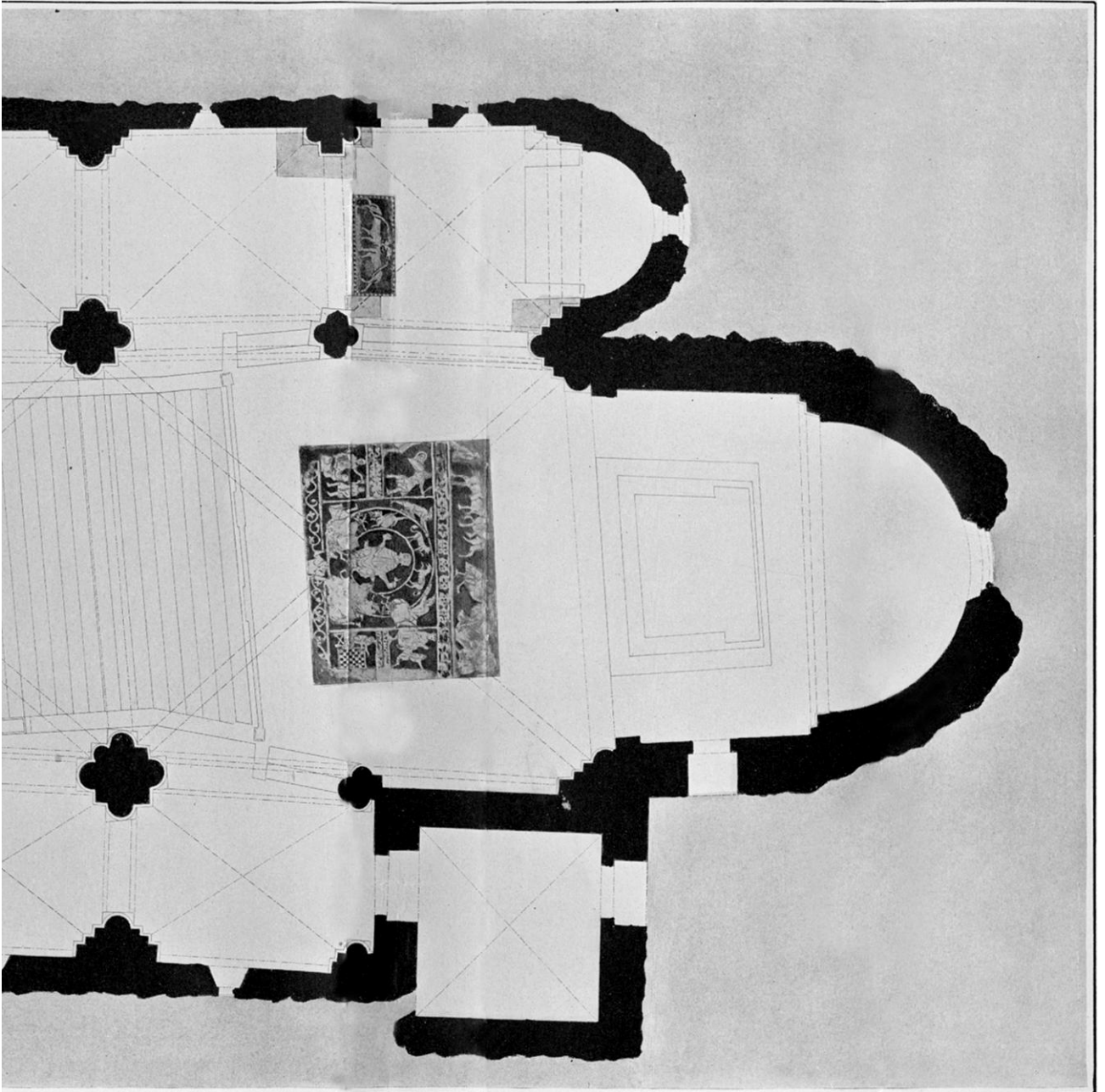
² Joseph Strzygowski, *Die Calenderbilder des Chronographen vom Jahre 354*. Jahrbuch des kaiserlich deutschen archaeologischen Instituts. Ergänzungsheft I, 1888.

³ G. Dehio und G. von Bezold, *Die kirchliche Baukunst des Abendlandes*. Stuttgart, J. G. Cotta, 1892. Text in 4to, 2 vols. Atlas in folio, 4 vols. Taf. 163 a.

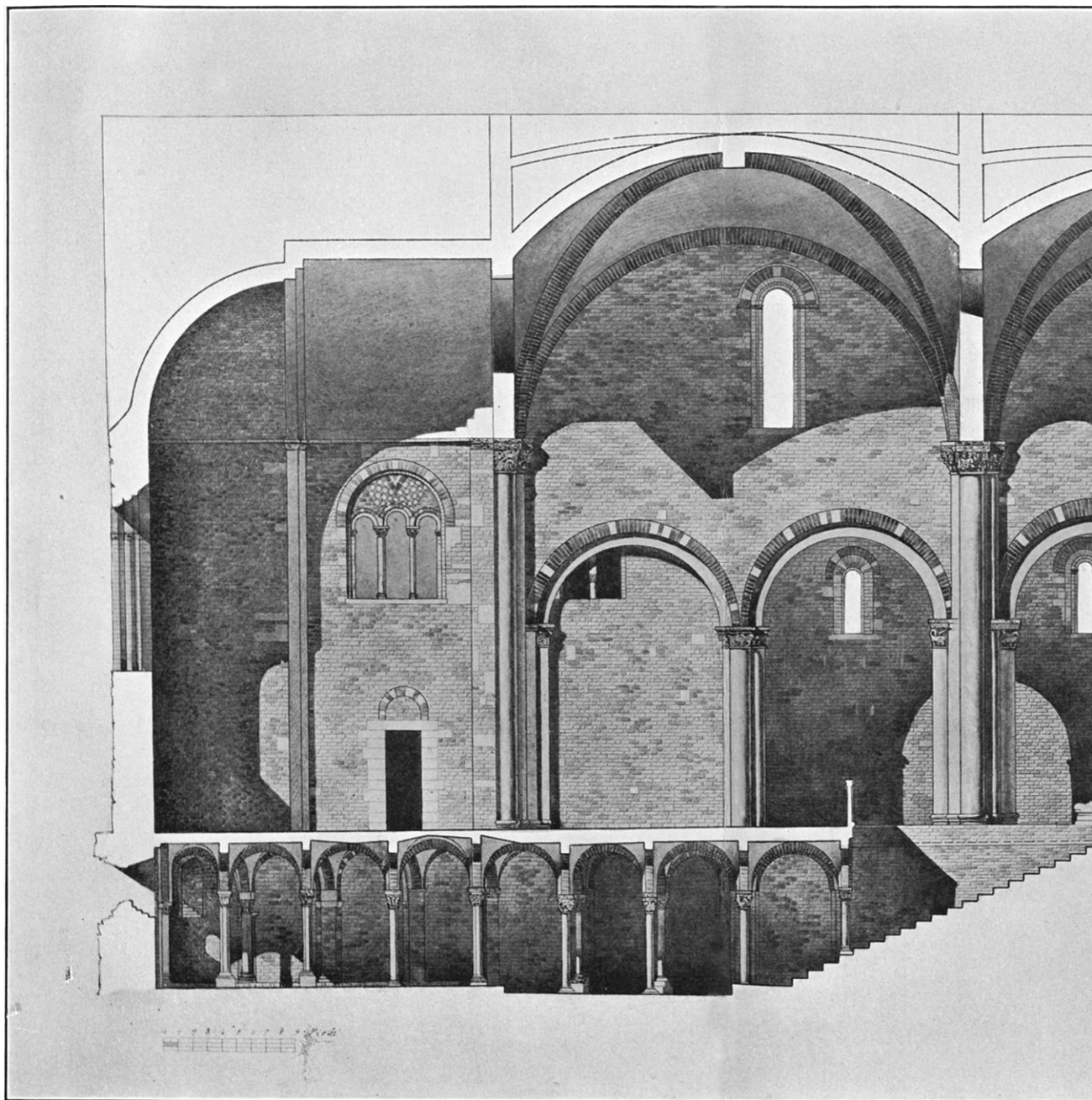
⁴ Luigi Ambiveri, *Monumenti ecclesiastici piacentini*. Piacenza, Bertola, 1888. Pamphlet. Estratto dall' *Indicatore Commerciale* del 1888.



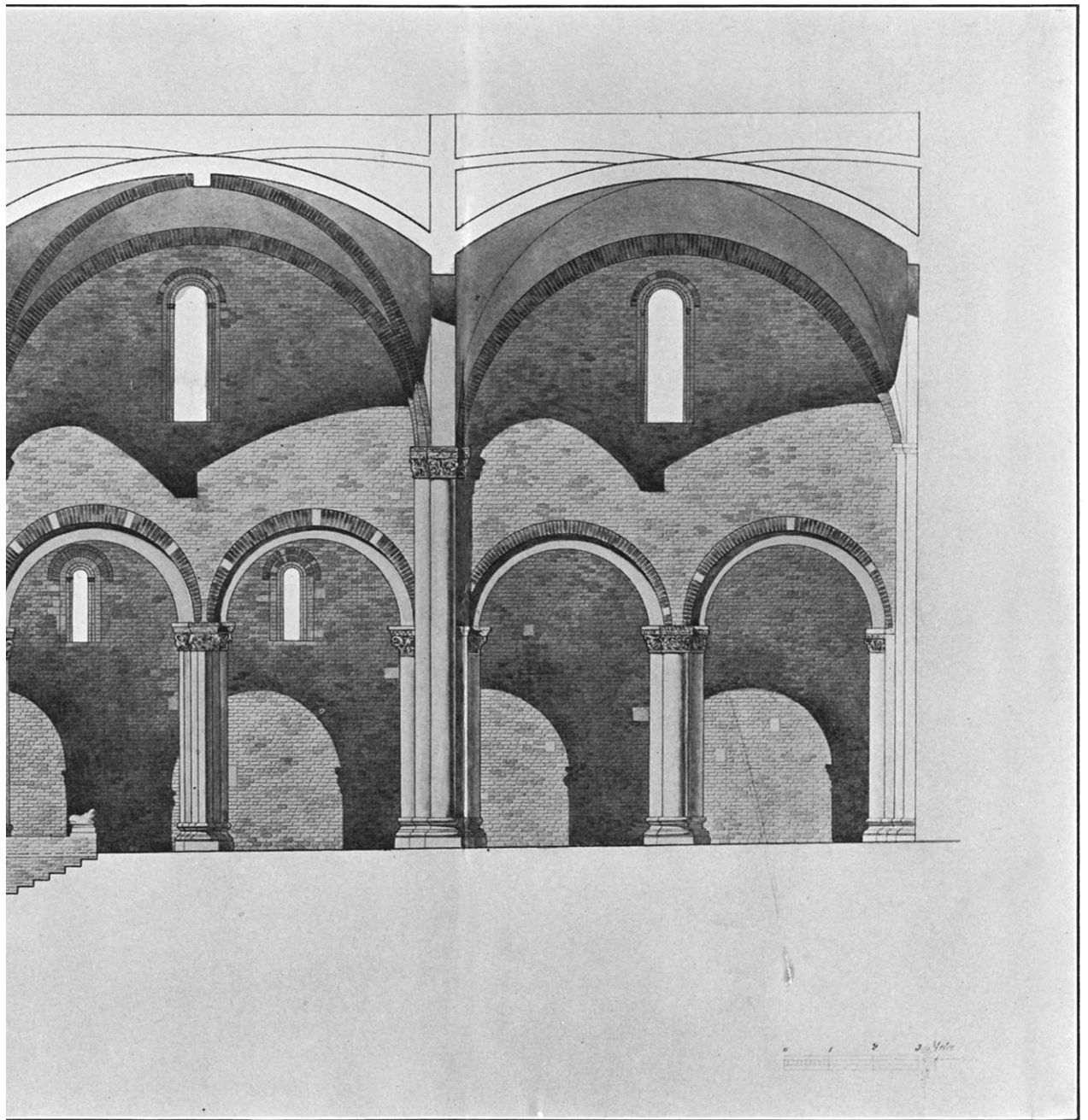
SAN SAVINO AT PIACENZA. GROUND PLAN OF



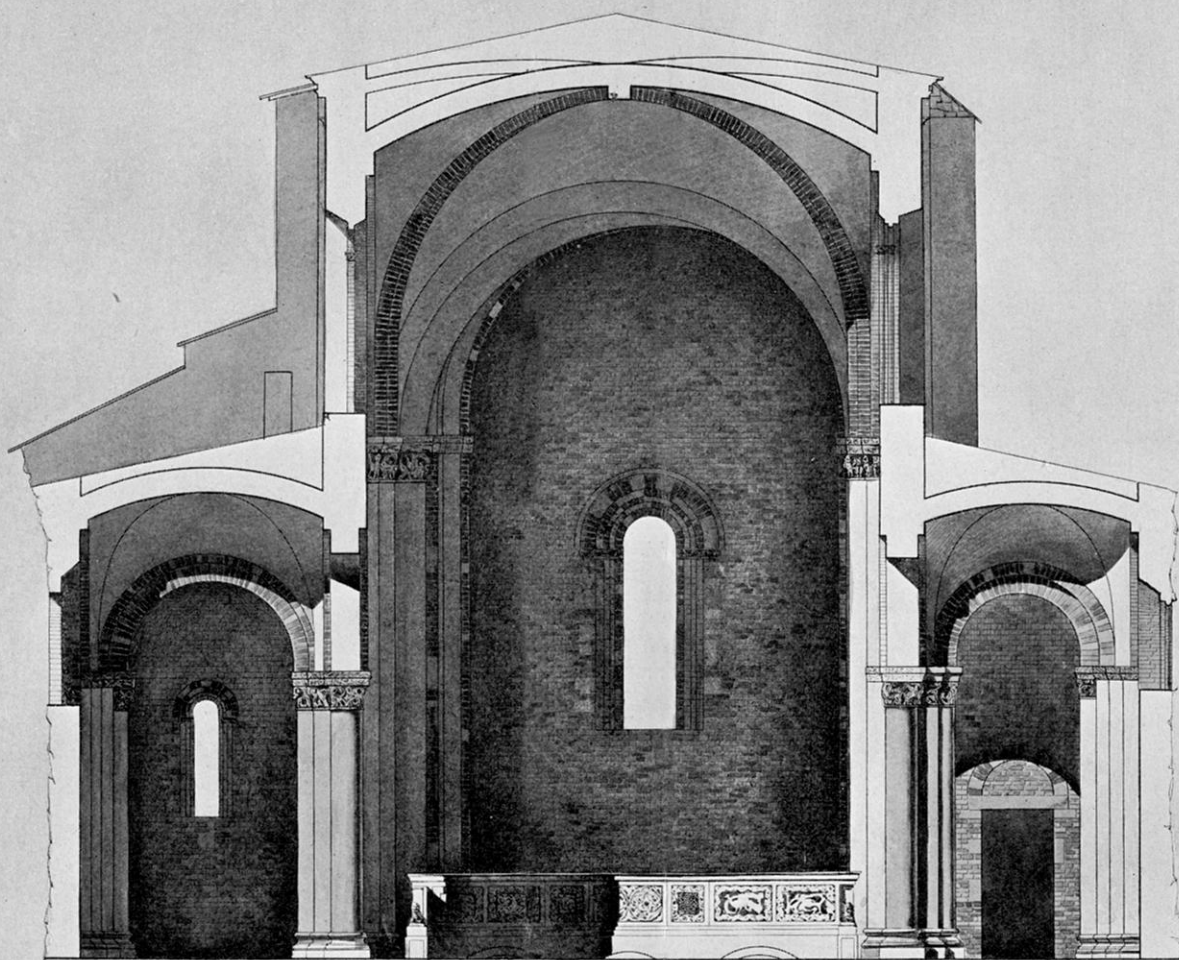
PLAN OF THE CHURCH RESTORED (A. Covini, del.)



SAN SAVINO AT PIACENZA. LONGITUD
The apse, the door and triforium of the choir, and the windows are modern.



LONGITUDINAL SECTION (A. Covini, del.)
modern. The original cells and the lines of the existing roof are indicated.



0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 *Piacenza*

0 1 2 3 *Voltri*

SAN SAVINO AT PIACENZA. TRANSVERSE SECTION OF THE CHURCH AS IT EXISTS TO-DAY (A. Covini, del.)

The apses, the choir rail, and the windows are modern. The cells of the original roof are indicated.

authors, who have been disputing for nearly a century upon the chronology of the Lombard style, taken the pains to study this church, lying, as it were, directly beneath their eyes, the controversy would have been decided long ago. It is unfortunately significant of the desultory and dilettante manner in which mediaeval archaeology has been too often pursued, that such a notable edifice, certainly entitled to rank among the most important examples of Romanesque architecture in northern Italy, has remained practically unknown.

A certain number of local scholars, it is true, have occupied themselves with San Savino. By all odds the most important publication on the church is the little book published at Piacenza (Stabilimento Tipografica Piacentino) in 1903 under the title *La Regia Basilica di San Savino*. This contains six separate monographs: *Memorie Critico-Storiche della Basilica di San Savino*, by D. Gaetano Malchiodi; *Iscrizioni Cristiane* and *Mosaici della Basilica di San Savino*, by G. Tononi; *L'Arte nel Crocefissio di San Savino*, by G. Ferrari; *Il Tabernacolo del 1510*, by Pietro Piacenza; and *I Restauri della R. Basilica di San Savino*, by Ettore Martini. This book is illustrated with thirty-four half-tones, several of which are of great value, since made from photographs taken before or during the restoration. The studies themselves are of varying merit, but in general contain little that is not found elsewhere. The account of the restorations by the engineer Martini is, however, important, since it contains descriptions of parts of the church which now no longer exist and a detailed analysis of the radical alterations carried out under the author's supervision. In the other monographs the student will find helpful notices only occasionally. The archaeological and artistic importance of the church has escaped all these authors, since they have mistaken the chronology of the building and have failed to place the monument in relationship with other examples of the Lombard style.

Of value chiefly for its illustrations in half-tone is the pamphlet on the capitals of San Savino by Dr. D. Gaetano Malchiodi.¹ The same writer has contributed a life of San Savino that contains some useful historical references and several half-tone

¹ Dr. D. Gaetano Malchiodi, *I Capitelli della Basilica di San Savino*. Piacenza, Favari, 1907.

illustrations of the basilica.¹ In the brief guide-book of Leopoldo Cerri² the history of the abbey is briefly summarized. Finally, the anonymous pamphlet entitled *Piacenza Monumentale*³ should be mentioned, since it contains a number of good half-tones taken from *La Regia Basilica*.

On the second respond of the southern side aisle, counting from the west, is an inscription stating that the church of San Savino was built by the bishop Everardo in the year 903; that in the year 1000 (*sic*) it was rebuilt by Bishop Sigifredo; that Bishop Aldo consecrated it on the 15th of October, 1107; that a thousand years after its first foundation the pious Prevosto Cassinario, finding that the architectural character of the building had suffered through barocco additions and that the edifice was threatening ruin, restored the church in its original (*sic*) form; and finally that Bishop Giovanni Battista (Scalabrini) celebrated the consecration on the 8th of November, 1903.⁴ This inscription, it is true, is no older than the restoration of 1903. It is here cited because it offers a convenient résumé of the history of the monument.

There is a tradition that San Savino, bishop of Piacenza, founded, a short distance outside the city, a church dedicated to the Apostles, in which he himself was subsequently buried.

¹ *San Savino Vescovo di Piacenza*. Piacenza, Tononi, 1905.

² Leopoldo Cerri, *Guida di Piacenza storica ed artistica*. Piacenza, Marina, s.d.

³ Piacenza, Foroni, 1908.

4 HANC DIVI SABINI AEDEM
AB EVERARDO EPISC AEDIFICATAM
ANNO CMIII
AB ANTISTITE VERO SIGEFRIDO
ANNO M ITERUM EXCITATAM
ALDUS CONSECRABAT ID OCT MCVII
MILLE A PRIMA FUNDATIONE
ELAPSI ANNI
EAMDEM IN PLURIBUS CORRUPTAM
ET IAM OCCULTE COLLABENTEM
ANTIQUAE SIMPLICITATI RESTITUIT
PIUS CASSINARIUS PREPOSITUS
CONSECRAVIT
IOANNES BATISTA EPISCOP
VI IDUS NOVEMBRIS MCMIII

In fact, in the *Chronicon Placentinum*¹ of Giovanni da Musso there is a remarkable passage to the following effect: "Constantinus and Opinianus, who were of Rome, built a church at Piacenza in honor of the Twelve Apostles. This church was consecrated by the blessed Bishop Savino. In it rest the bodies of the bishop and of five other saints. . . . Concerning this church others have written: I, Mauro, humble bishop in the reign of Lothaire, by order of the angels came to my own city and buried the body of Bishop San Savino on the 17th of January. I consecrated the altar in honor of him and Sant' Antonino on the 4th of February. I buried San Gelasio on the 6th of March. I buried San Vittorino the deacon . . . in May. I buried the body of San Donnino the deacon on the 23d of December. The blessed virgin Vittoria departed this life; after their death, Mauro, the bishop, lived six years. I, Abbot Ephrem, buried his body next to the body of San Savino, at the left, and wrote this with my own hand, and placed it here. I come not to break the law, but to fulfil it. No one shall be crowned except him who has fought the good fight. The year of the incarnation of Christ, 447." Then follows what we learn from another text which will be cited below to be an epitaph on the tomb of the saint: "Savino, a man of sanctity and righteousness, founder of this monastery, rests for eternity at the feet of the saints. His body is worthy of being placed beside those of the Apostles, for his faith was like theirs." The chronicler resumes: "These very old writings, which can with difficulty be read, are found in a certain very old book in the church of San Savino at Piacenza. The relics of the saints referred to were buried in the old church of San Savino at Piacenza, that is, the church which the bishop Savino consecrated in honor of the Twelve Apostles."²

¹ Ed. Muratori, *R.I.S.* XVI, 620.

² Constantinus & Opinianus, qui de Roma fuerunt, aedificaverunt Ecclesiam unam in Placentia ad honorem duodecim Apostolorum, quam consecravit Beatissimus Antistes Sabinus, cujus corpus hic requiescit, cum quinque corporibus Sanctorum. . . . De ista Ecclesia & alii. *Ego Maurus humilis Episcopus de Lothario Regno, & propter Angelicam jussionem veni ad propriam Civitatem, & sepelivi corpus Sancti Sabini Episcopi XVI. Kal. Februarii. Istud Altare ego consecravi in suum honorem, & Sancti Antonini Martyris Pridie Nonas Februarii. Sanctum Gelasium sepelivi Pridie Nonas Martii. Sepelivi corpus*

Giovanni da Musso was an author who lived in the fifteenth century. His notices, although taken, as he asserts, from a very old manuscript, offer so many difficulties that they are open to the suspicion of being forgeries, perpetrated at an early date, possibly with the purpose of authenticating spurious relics. Thus the document is dated in the year of the incarnation of Christ, 447; but, in the first half of the fifth century, the year was always denoted by the names of the consuls. Furthermore, the emperor Lothaire is spoken of as living at that time, whereas, in fact, he was not born until over three hundred years later. Finally, to pass by many minor inconsistencies, an abbot of San Savino is mentioned in a document purporting to be of the fifth century, when, as we shall presently see, the abbey was not established until the tenth century.

However, the good faith of Giovanni da Musso himself is not to be doubted, and we are fortunately able to prove that he has quoted his sources exactly, since the manuscript to which he refers is still in existence and has been studied by Poggiali.¹ This manuscript, which was written in 1253 by a certain Rufino, monk and *Carmarlingo* of the monastery of San Savino, contains an index or catalogue of the manuscripts which the archives possessed at that time. After the catalogue, begins a history of the monastery. "The church of San Savino," he says, "was founded in the year 423, and was, at first, situated in the fields outside of the city of Piacenza. This I found

Sancti Victorini Diaconi. . . Idus Madii. Recondivi corpus Sancti Donini Diaconi X Kalend. Januarii. Migravit de hoc seculo beatissima Virgo Victoria; post obitum eorum vixit Maurus Episcopus annis VI. Ego Abbas Ephrem sepelivi corpus ejus juxta corpus S. Sabini in sinistram partem, & scripsi mea manu & condidi hic. Non veni legem solvere, sed adimplere. Nemo coronabitur nisi qui legitime certaverit. Anno Incarnationis Christi CCCCXLVII.

"Has aedes condens sacra virtute Sabinus
Sanctorum pedibus junctus requiescit in aevum
Dignus Apostolica sociatus corpore sede."

Haec scriptura multum vetustissima reperitur in quodam Libro maximè vetustissimo in Ecclesia S. Savini Episcopi Placentiae, quae vix potest legi. Hae Reliquiae Sanctorum reconditae erant in Ecclesia veteri S. Savini Episcopi Placentiae, quam dictus Antistes Savinus in honorem duodecim Apostolorum consecravit.

¹ Christoforo Poggiali, *Memorie storiche della città di Piacenza*. Piacenza, F. G. Giacomazzi, 1757-1766. 12 vols. 4to. II, 55-75.

written in a certain privilege almost illegible because of its great age, so that I could with difficulty make out what I was seeking. But I did find who were its founders and whence they came, since it is written in a certain very old martyrology that there were two men, illustrious for their wisdom and goodness, excellent for their sanctity and religion, who came from the city of Rome; one was called Constantinus and the other Opinianus. They founded a church situated, as has been said, in the fields outside the city of Piacenza and dedicated to the Twelve Apostles. This church that they built was large and splendid, as may be gathered from what is written in a certain privilege of the blessed Everardo, bishop of Piacenza. This was the church dedicated by San Savino, and here the blessed Mauro buried solemnly the body of San Savino, after the death of the latter. In after years, by the grace of divine mercy, innumerable concessions and gifts and many privileges were bestowed upon this church by the popes of the Holy Roman Church and by Catholic emperors. But of these diplomas I cannot give an account; for, about the year 902, pagans, enemies of the Cross of Christ, came and devastated whatever they could lay their hands upon that was outside of the city of Piacenza, and in their tyrannous rage mercilessly slew men. These hordes completely destroyed the church of San Savino, which had at first been consecrated in honor of the Twelve Apostles. The above facts are related by Sant' Everardo, an illustrious bishop of Piacenza, who labored with all his might to build anew the monastery in which I am."¹

¹ *Fuit enim primo constructa Ecclesia Beati Savini in Campanea Placentina a prima fundatione sui CCCXXIII a Christi Nativitate, secundum quod reperi in quodam Privilegio nimia vestustate consumpto, ita quod vix in eo potui deprehendere quod quaerebam. Sed & Fundatores qui fuerunt, & unde originem duxerint reperi, scilicet in quodam vetustissimo Martyrologio, quod fuerunt duo viri sapientia & bonitate praeclari, sanctitate & religione ornati de Civitate Romana. Unus vocabatur Constan. & alius Opinian. Fundaverunt enim primo, ut dictum est, quamdam Ecclesiam in Campanea Placentina ad honorem Dei, & XII. Apostolorum, & fecerunt eam mirae magnitudinis, secundum quod in quodam Privilegio D. Enurardi Episcopi Placentiae continetur; quae consecrata fuit per Beatissimum Savinum Episcopum Placentiae; in qua Ecclesia Beatissimus Maurus corpus S. Savini post mortem ejusdem canticis sepellivit. Inde factum est, divina suffragante clementia, quod eidem Ecclesiae innumerabiles concessionibus, & offensiones, & multa privilegia a summis Pontificibus S. R. E.*

The covers of this document are formed of two manuscripts, — one, a ritual, the other, a memorandum of the consecration of the new church of San Savino, and of the relics which were deposited in that edifice. The latter, also published by Poggiali,¹ reads as follows: “The church of the bishop and confessor San Savino was dedicated in October, 1107. These are the relics there placed: first, under the principal altar, the body of San Savino Confessor.”² Then follows a long list of relics, after which the manuscript continues: “This church [Mosia has been added above in a later hand] was built by the Romans Constantinus and Opinianus, in honor of the Twelve Apostles. The blessed bishop, Savino, whose body rests there together with the bodies of five other saints, consecrated it.”³ After another list of relics, the manuscript resumes: “Near by is another tomb where lie three virtuous monks, Luca, Ambrogio, and Privato; elsewhere is the tomb of the abbot Vittorino and others.”⁴ Then follows the same passage quoted by Giovanni da Musso, with indeed a few verbal differences, but not such as throw any light upon the difficulties of chronology. Thus Mauro is spoken of as the last (*ultimus*) bishop of the reign of Lothaire, instead of as “humble” (*humilis*) bishop.⁵

& a fidelibus Imperatoribus sint collata, de quibus mentionem facere non potero. Tempore enim quo currebat DCCCCII, venerunt Pagani, & inimici Crucis Christi, & destruxerunt, & comburerunt quicquid reppererunt extra Placentinae moenia Civitatis, tyrannica rabie, hostili gladio humana corpora trucidantes; & tunc cremaverunt, & destruxerunt penitus Ecclesiam Beati Savini, quae in honorem XII Apostolorum fuerat primitus consecrata. Et praedicta narrata inveniuntur per D. Enurardum egregium Praesulem Placentinum, qui totis viribus studuit istud Monasterium, in quo sum, de novo videlicet fabricare.

¹ *Ibid.*

² *MCVII de Mens. Octob. dedicata est Ecclesia B. Savini Episcopi, & Confessoris. Hae sunt Reliquiae ibi positae. Primo in Altare Majori est Corpus B. Savini Confessoris, etc., etc.*

³ *Istam vero Ecclesiam (Moxiarum evvi scritto di sopra, ma da penna più moderna) aedificaverunt Constantinus & Opinianus, qui de Roma fuerunt, ad honorem XII Apostolorum, quam consecravit Beatiss. Antistes Sabinus, cujus Corpus hic requiescit, cum quinque corporibus Sanctorum.*

⁴ *Ad latera eorum alium sepulchrum, ubi requiescunt tres Monachi Religiosi, idest Luca, Ambrosius, & Privatus. In alia cuba, contra nullam horam (sic), sepulchrum Abbatis Victorini de ista Ecclesia, & alii.*

⁵ I give this text, as cited by Poggiali, entire for purposes of comparison with the text of Giovanni da Musso quoted above: *Ego Maurus ultimus Episcopus de Lothario Regno, & propter angelicam visionem veni ad propriam Civitatem,*

But these are not the only copies of the mysterious notice that have come down to us. Another, recording precisely the same things in the same words, is said by Poggiali to exist in one of the two *Vetutissimi Necrologii* of the archives of the monastery, and still others are extant in various other manuscripts. Certain of these have been stated to be as old as the tenth century, but Poggiali, who appears to have made a careful study of the subject, believes that none can be assigned to so early an epoch. At any rate, it is clear that the notice was fabricated before 1253, when Ruffino, whose good faith there seems to be no reason to doubt, read it in a manuscript which he asserts was very ancient. At whatever date this false notice was concocted, it is entirely probable that it preserves for us, mixed with fictions, an authentic tradition, viz., that the body of San Savino was buried in a church in the suburbs of Piacenza in a spot known as Mosia. As for the date 423 when, according to Ruffino, the church was founded, the saint was at that time certainly dead, although the year of his decease is somewhat doubtful. If, therefore, the church of the Apostles was built during his pontificate, as seems probable, it must have been founded somewhat earlier than this.

This same tradition is echoed in another notice, probably also inexact, but which seems to be derived from an independent source. The *Chronica Episcoporum Placentinorum* states: "Savino built outside the city a wonderful monastery (*sic*) which afterwards was entirely destroyed and everything belonging to that monastery was transferred to the basilica of the Twelve Apostles by San Mauro, his successor. The latter buried there San Savino as well as Eusebio, Donnino, Vittore, Gelasio, and Vittoria." ¹

& sepellivi Corpus S. Sabini Episcopi XVI. Kalend. Februar. Istud Altarium ego consecravi in suum honorem, & S. Antonini Martyris. Pridie Non. Febr. Sanctum Gelasium sepellivi. Pridie Non. Martii sepellivi Corpus S. Victoris Diaconi. Idus Maji recondivi Corpus Domini. X Kal. Jan. migravit de hoc saeculo Beatissima Victoria. Post obitum eorum vixit Maurus Episcopus Annis VI. Id. Septemb. migravit. Ego Abbas Ephrem sepellivi Corpus ejus, juxta Corpus S. Sabini in sinistram partem, & scripsi manu mea, & condivi hic. Non veni legem solvere, sed adimplere. Nemo coronabitur, nisi qui legitime certaverit. Epitaphium supra tumba S. Sabini. Has Aedas condens sacra virtute Sabinus, Sanctorum pedibus junctus requievit in aevum, dignus apostolica sociatus corpore sede.

¹ Hic (Sabinus) aedificavit extra Civitatem mirabile Monasterium, quod postea

That the church of the Apostles was destroyed in 903, is known not only from the passage from Ruffino quoted above, but, happily, from the original charter of Everardo, which is still extant, and has been published by Campi.¹ In this charter the bishop states² that he and his chapter had unanimously vowed "to erect a monastery in the church of San Savino, the Confessor of Christ, which is situated not far outside the walls of the city." He goes on to relate: "While we were desiring with fervent love to fulfil this vow, there came, alas! the miserable and horrible race of unhappy pagans, who slew men with their swords, and burned with the fire of their fury the churches of God, and in particular that church of San Savino. Subsequently, we began to consider often and diligently how to avoid breaking our vow, and we earnestly sought another site for the monastery. By the Grace of God, our search was rewarded and we found a suitable and fitting place within the walls of the city in a field which we had acquired justly and legally; and there we erected a church from its foundations, in the name of God for the honor of God and San Savino, and there we instituted monastic discipline. . . . Therefore, we give the said field to the new church of San Savino." The deed was dated March 30, 903.³ From this authentic docu-

penitus destructum est, & omnia illius Monasterii fuerunt translata in Basilicam duodecim Apostolorum à Beato Mauro successore suo, qui corpus ejus sepelivit cum infrascriptis corporibus videlicet; Eusebium, Doninum, Victorem, Gelasium, & Victoriam. (Ed. Muratori, *R.I.S.* XVI, 627.)

¹ Pietro Maria Campi, *Dell' historia ecclesiastica di Piacenza*. Piacenza, Giovanni Bazachi, 1651. Folio. 3 vols. I, 478.

² Quapropter pari voto, parique consensu statuimus Monasterium aedificare monasticum in Ecclesia B. Sauini Confessoris Christi sita haud procul foris Ciuitatis murum. . . . Haec itaque vota dum feruenti amore cuperemus explere (heu pro dolor) superuenit misera, horrendaque gens infelicium Paganorum, qui hostili gladio corpora trucidantes, igneq; furoris Ecclesias Dei cremantes concremauerunt pariter praefatam B. Sauini Ecclesiam. Postea denique caepimus frequenter, sedulèq; tractare, quatenus nostrum non cassetur votum; alterum diligenter requisuimus situm. Quaesiuius igitur, & miserante Deo inuenimus habilem & congruum locum infrà Ciuitatis moenia in nostro scilicet praedio iustè, & legaliter acquisito; ibique in Dei nomine Ecclesiam ad honorem Dei, & S. Sauini à fundamentis construximus, atq; officinas monasticas ibidè ordinauimus. . . . Quo circa praedictum praedium nostrum ad eandem nouam S. Sauini Ecclesiam tradimus.

³ Regnante D. Berengario gratia Dei Rege anno regni eius in Dei nomine sextodecimo, tertio Kalen. Aprilis indictione sexta.

ment it is evident that anterior to the destruction by the Hungarians, there was no monastery connected with the church. The charter of Everardo seems to imply that in 903 the new church was already erected. Certain relics, however, were not translated until some years after this, for the *Chronica Episcoporum Placentinorum* states: "Conrad was elected bishop of Piacenza in the year of our Lord 912. He translated the bodies of the saints Vittore, Donnino, Gelasio, and Peregrino into the crypt of San Savino."¹ At any event, the building erected in the early years of the tenth century seems to have been hastily and poorly constructed (as, indeed, the misfortunes of that unhappy age may well have necessitated), since a century later the church was rebuilt. This fact is recorded by two late chroniclers: Giovanni da Musso, who states that "in the year of Christ 1005 the monastery of San Savino was rebuilt without the walls of the city of Piacenza by Sigifredo, bishop of Piacenza";² and the author of the *Chronica Episcoporum Placentinorum*: "Sigifredo was elected bishop of Piacenza in the year 997. He sat twenty-two years. . . . He built a wonderful monastery in the city of Piacenza in honor of San Savino."³

That the church was again rebuilt at the end of the eleventh century and consecrated in 1107 is known from three sources. First, the manuscript in the archives described by Poggiali and already cited above, gives us the exact year of the consecration, October, 1107. Secondly, the same *Chronica Episcoporum Placentinorum* we have already often quoted, adds the name of the bishop who consecrated the church: "Aldo was elected bishop of Piacenza in the year 1103, and sat eleven years; he consecrated the church of San Savino."⁴ Thirdly, a text of Giovanni

¹ Conradus eligitur Episcopus Placentinus Anno Domini DCCCCXII. Hic corpora SS. Victoris, Donini, Gelasii, & Peregrini recondidit in inferiori Ecclesia S. Sabini. (Ed. Muratori, *R.I.S.* XVI, 629.)

² Anno Christi MV. Monasterium S. Savini fuit reaedificatum extra muros Civitatis Placentiae per Sigifredum Episcopum Placentiae. (Johannis de Mus-sis, *Chronicon Placentinum*, Ed. Muratori, *R.I.S.* XVI, 451). The charter of Everardo states distinctly that the church was *within* the walls of the city.

³ Sigifredus electus fuit Episcopus Placentinus Anno Domini DCCCCXCVII. Hic sedit annis XXII. . . . Monasterium mirabile in Civitate Placentiae in honorem S. Sabini aedificavit. (Ed. Muratori, *R.I.S.* XVI, 630.)

⁴ Aldo fuit electus Episcopus Placentinus Anno Domini MCIII. seditque annis XI. . . . Hic consecravit Ecclesiam S. Sabini. (*Ibid.* 630.)

da Musso states that "in the year 1107 the monastery of San Savino was consecrated by Lord Aldo, bishop of Piacenza."¹ That the consecration took place on the 15th day of October, is added by Campi² and Poggiali.³ Whence these authors derive this additional piece of information I do not know, but suspect that they may have had under their eyes a fourth notice of the consecration of 1107, of which I can find no trace. In any case the texts already cited are sufficient to establish the fact that the church was dedicated in that year.

The remaining history of the monastery may be briefly resumed. Endowed with more than the usual number of possessions and worldly goods by various pious benefactors, it became extremely wealthy and powerful. The vast extent of its lands is evident from the Bull of Innocent II. of *ca.* 1132.⁴ Later, like most of the Italian monasteries, San Savino fell into decline. At the end of the fifteenth century the church was completely restored by Ruffino di Lando, in a style very different from that of the early twelfth century, which it had doubtless preserved up to that epoch. This is recorded by an inscription, still extant in the church, that has been published by Ambiveri⁵ and Malchiodi.⁶ This re-building was doubtless occasioned by the fact that in 1495 the same Ruffino di Lando, who was the Commendatory Abbot, had dismissed the Benedictine monks, and installed instead monks of the order of St. Jerome. Gregory XIII, by a Bull⁷ dated from Frascati on May 19, 1579, suppressed the Abbey and Commend and forbade the use of the insignia of abbatial dignity in the church. The monks of St. Jerome, however, still remained there until 1810.⁸ In 1631 the ancient apse was replaced by a new choir, and in 1687 the nave was being covered with barocco stuccos. Chapels in the same style were added to the side aisles.

¹ Anno MCVII. Consecratum fuit Monasterium S. Savini à Domino Aldo Episcopo Placentiae. (*Ibid.* 452.) The same author records the consecration of 1107 a second time. (*Ibid.* 621.)

² *Op. cit.* I, 378.

³ *Op. cit.* IV, 58.

⁴ Published in part by Poggiali, IV, 120.

⁵ Luigi Ambiveri, *Dei principali errori detti intorno ai monumenti piacentini*. Piacenza, Gregorio Tononi, 1887. Page 34.

⁶ *La Regia Basilica*, p. 31.

⁷ Poggiali, *op. cit.* X, 197.

⁸ Ambiveri, *Monumenti*, p. 18.

The Lombard edifice disappeared beneath a coating of intonaco, although some portions of the twelfth century edifice always remained visible. The mosaics of the crypt were described by Campi in 1651; this author saw in the nave a mosaic representing a labyrinth which no longer exists. In the view of the façade printed by Poggiali in the middle of the eighteenth century there is visible, it is true, no trace of twelfth century architecture, but Ambiveri, writing in 1888, speaks of the church as still preserving its Romanesque pilasters and crypt. However, he states that the pilasters had been stripped of their barocco intonaco during the nineteenth century.¹ Not until the recent radical restoration of 1902-1903, was the interior of the church completely freed of its Renaissance embellishments.

The church consists at present of a nave of three double bays, two side aisles, a rectangular choir, and an apse (PLATE V). The northern side aisle terminates in an absideole, while the southern is cut short by the campanile which rises in the easternmost bay. Before the recent restoration there were numerous barocco chapels, but all except two have been removed. The nave is covered

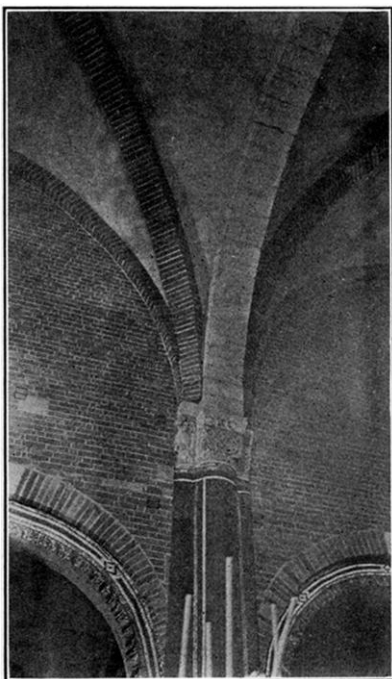


FIGURE 1. — DETAIL OF CLEARSTORY ABOVE THE EASTERNMOST ALTERNATE PIER ON THE NORTH SIDE OF THE NAVE.

with rib vaults in its two easternmost bays, by a groin vault in its westernmost bay; the choir has a barrel vault, the side aisles and crypts groin vaults throughout.² There is no tri-

¹ This was done in 1855, according to Malchiodi, *Capitelli*, p. 3.

² Three vaults of the side aisles have been rebuilt. (Martini, in *La Regia Basilica*, p. 59.)

forum gallery, but a high clearstory. The supports of the nave are alternately heavy and light (PLATE VI). On the heavier piers is engaged a system of three shafts, which is carried through the capitals of the piers and receives the ribs of the vaulting (Fig. 1). In front of the church is a narthex in the barocco style, which probably replaces a destroyed narthex of the twelfth century. The ancient façade is still

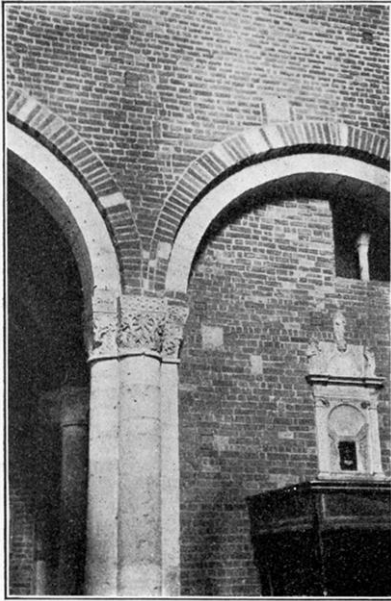


FIGURE 2. — EASTERNMOST PIER ON THE SOUTH SIDE OF THE NAVE ; SHOWING BASE AND PRE-EXISTING CAMPANILE.

marred by barocco intonaco, but it is clear that it was raised above the roof lines so as to mask the true form of the section of the church.

The campanile is older than the rest of the edifice. This is evident not only from its position, since it cuts off the southern side aisle, which is, as it were, built around it (PLATE V), but from the fact that one of its windows, which must have opened outside formerly, now looks into the interior of the church and is cut across by one of the arches of the main arcade (Fig. 2). This campanile contains in its lower story a very slightly domed groin vault. The upper part of

the tower has unfortunately been entirely denatured in the time of the Renaissance.

The groin vaults of the crypt are supplied with transverse and longitudinal arches, but doming is avoided, probably because the builders did not wish to raise higher than necessary the floor of the choir (PLATE VI). This crypt of San Savino is extraordinary in that it is placed entirely below the level of the church ; I mean to say that the choir floor over it is hardly raised above the level of the nave. Raised choirs are characteristic of Lombard edifices of the eleventh and twelfth centuries,

and it is necessary to go back to early Christian or Carolingian monuments, such as San Salvatore at Brescia, to find an example of a crypt thus sunk, like a cellar, below the level of the church. In the eighteenth century the crypt was enlarged by the addition of a new bay to the westward; in the restoration of 1903 this bay was removed and the existing stairway was erected.

The groin vaults of the side aisles are domed and supplied with transverse and longitudinal arches (PLATE VII). Of similar type is the groin vault of the westernmost bay of the nave (PLATE VI). The rib vaults of the eastern bays of the nave have square diagonals of brick and are also highly domed. The present choir is largely, and the apse entirely, modern, but the latter has been restored on the traces of the old foundations, which are still visible in the exterior of the east walls. The doorway and trifora on the south side of the choir are modern, but the barrel vault over the choir is ancient (Fig. 3). The foundations of an ancient apse, antedating the one on the foundations of which the existing modern apse has been built, were discovered during the restoration of 1903, beneath the present choir. It was therefore inferred by the restorers that the church originally terminated in an apse, placed where is now the choir; and that the choir and apse, upon whose foundations the existing ones were erected, were substituted, at a later date, for this original apse. Most unfortunately no photographs or measurements were made of the foundations, nor has the quality of the masonry been described. It is consequently impossible to judge of the date or of the significance of these remains, which have been covered up. However, the apse built upon the plan on which the present one was constructed, was contemporary with the existing church, as is proved by the quality of the little ancient masonry belonging to it that still survives. The earlier apse must therefore have belonged to an earlier building, not improbably to that of 1005.

An act of unpardonable vandalism on the part of the restorers was the destruction of the ancient roof of the church, a monument of the greatest archaeological and technical importance, and unique in Lombardy, if not in Europe. From what is told me by persons present in the church during the restoration and

by Signor Martini, it is clear that there was erected above the vaults of the nave a series of lesser vaults, superimposed one upon the other, and worked to the form of a gable, on which tiles were laid directly.¹ In the sections (PLATES VI and VII) I have attempted to indicate the structural principles on which this remarkable roof was erected and the lines of the principal vaults. This restoration, however, is frankly hypothetical in several details. The smaller, upper vaults I have not even attempted to restore, owing to complete lack of evidence of their dispositions.

This roof of San Savino is of significance for the history of art. Instances are numerous in which the Lombard builders attempted by various expedients to reduce the use of timber in their roofs. In fact, rib vaults were adopted, as I have shown in my monograph on the subject,² solely with the view to economizing wood. Domed groin vaults had been constructed in Italy ever since the Byzantine period, with the aid of the very flimsiest sort of centring in wood, consisting merely of two moulds following the lines of the diagonals and of a movable cerce. To erect a groin vault over a large area, such as a nave, with so light a centring, overtaxed the daring and ability of the early architects. They consequently substituted for light wooden arches following the lines of the groin a heavier, more substantial arch in brick, which served as a permanent centring on which the vault could be erected with the aid of a cerce. Hence the rib vault. The church of San Savino offers a curious demonstration of the fact that the rib vault was considered thus merely as a structural makeshift. In the two eastern bays, which, as we shall presently see, were the first erected, ribs were used; in the later western bay, the architect seems to have felt himself able to construct a groin vault even without the use of ribs, and accordingly immediately abandoned them. To dispense with wood still further, he avoided using timbers in constructing a roof to cover his vaults, but placed there instead the series of vaults already described. By means

¹ Martini (in *La Regia Basilica*, p. 60) has written a brief description of this roof and has published the only photograph made of it before its destruction.

² *The Construction of Gothic and Lombard Vaults*. New Haven, Yale University Press, and Oxford, Henry Frowde, 1911.

of this clever device he was enabled to place the roof tiles on his edifice without using a single stick of timber. There are extant numerous other Lombard edifices in which roofs were constructed entirely without wood. Usually in such cases, however, as at Santa Annunziata of Corneto, or San Fedele of Como, a solid bed of mortar is laid on top of the vaults, and on top of this bed of mortar the tiles are placed. The arrangement at San Savino was infinitely more ingenious. By a series of vaults the weight of the mass imposed upon the roof was vastly lightened, a sort of porous construction of hollow cells being substituted for a solid mass of masonry. Moreover, these cells were very cleverly disposed, so that their weight fell principally either upon the transverse arches or upon the outside walls, and thus did not charge unduly the great vaults underneath. This ingenious roofing, without any doubt, was contemporary with the original construction of the church. The vast quantity of material removed from this roof when the cells were demolished during the recent restoration was for the most part employed to construct the new walls and especially those of the side aisles. I was fortunate in discovering, however, in a yard back of the church, a pile of bricks which the sacristan assured me had formed part of the demolished roofing. These bricks were certainly of *ca.* 1100, and hence contemporary with the bricks employed in the main body of the edifice.

The main vaults of the nave are reënforced at present somewhat irregularly by salient buttresses and at times by transverse walls raised upon the transverse arches of the side aisles (PLATE VII). They have been more or less changed, but appear never to have been regular or symmetrical.

The section of the piers shows considerable variation, as may be seen in the plan (PLATE V). In some cases polygonal members are introduced. The responds of the side aisles, like the piers of the nave, are alternately heavier and lighter.

Tie-rods in metal, traces of which were found during the restoration, were used to neutralize the thrust of the arches of the main arcade.

The church is constructed of bricks in which are inserted stone trimmings and occasionally blocks of stone placed irregularly in the wall. The bricks are comparatively small, of vary-

ing thickness, and evenly laid in horizontal courses. The great majority was new, but some second-hand ones were employed. Occasionally herring-bone courses are inserted; often the bricks are laid with their small ends exposed. At times the courses are broken by bricks placed vertically or in triangular patterns. All the bricks are incised with herring-bone lines. This cross-

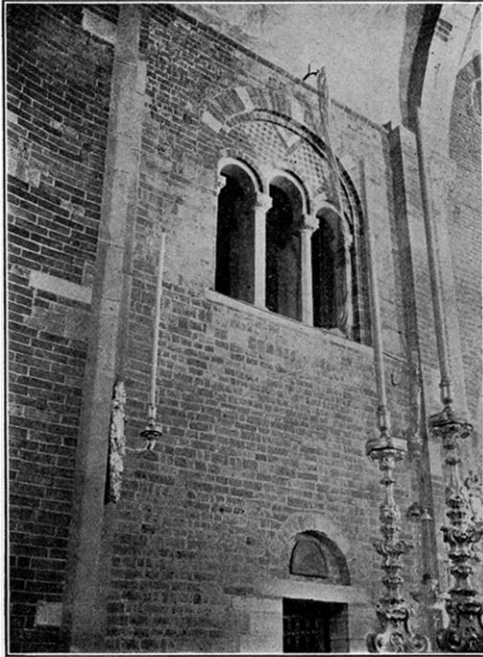


FIGURE 3. —SOUTH WALL OF CHOIR; SHOWING BARREL VAULT AND FRAGMENTS OF ANCIENT MASONRY.

(The doorway and triforium are modern.)

hatching is a characteristic of Lombard bricks, and was purposely done to afford a key for the intonaco with which the walls were completely covered. Lombard bricks were made by hand, not in a mould, hence is to be explained their extraordinary variety of size and shape. Incised lines were scratched on the clay when it was still soft and wet and before it was baked. Since the bricks were not made for any special position, it was found convenient to incise more than one side, so that the bricklayer could place them as they happened to fit in.

This explains why we sometimes find the incised side of a brick placed towards the interior of the wall and even incised bricks embedded in solid masonry. During the restoration traces of the ancient frescoes with which the walls were doubtless once entirely covered came to light, but were not preserved. In the narthex are two frescoes in good preservation, but they are not very ancient, being dated 1350 by an inscription.

The masonry of the campanile has been so thoroughly restored that it is impossible to judge of its original character.

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